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General Assembly

Fifty-sixth session

Official Records

79th plenary meeting
Friday, 7 December 2001, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Han Seung-soo ..... (Republic of Korea)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Babaa (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 21 (*continued*)

Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations

(a) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Latin American Economic System

Report of the Secretary-General (A/56/171)

(b) Cooperation between the United Nations and the International Organization of la Francophonie

Report of the Secretary-General (A/56/390)

Draft resolution (A/56/L.34)

(c) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe

Report of the Secretary-General (A/56/302)

Draft resolution (A/56/L.31)

(d) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference

Report of the Secretary-General (A/56/398)

Draft resolution (A/56/L.36)

(e) Cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States

Report of the Secretary-General (A/56/474)

Draft resolution (A/56/L.26)

(f) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/55/996, A/56/449)

Draft resolution (A/56/L.35)

(g) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Community of Central African States

Report of the Secretary-General (A/56/301)

Draft resolution (A/56/L.25/Rev.2)

(h) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Cooperation Organization

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01-68187 (E)

Report of the Secretary-General (A/56/122)

Draft resolution (A/56/L.32)

(i) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

Report of the Secretary-General (A/56/125)

(j) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity

Report of the Secretary-General (A/56/489)

Draft resolution (A/56/L.37)

(k) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Preparatory Commission (A/56/317)

Draft resolution (A/56/L.38)

(l) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Organization (A/56/490)

Draft resolution (A/56/L.30)

(m) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Pacific Islands Forum

Draft resolution (A/56/L.29)

Ms. Pulido Santana (Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to express Venezuela's great pleasure with the General Assembly's consideration of the sub-item entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union", given the special importance my country attaches to both organizations and, in particular, given the ways in which the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) annually disseminates the agenda of the United Nations at the parliamentary level.

Allow me to express our satisfaction with the report of the Secretary-General in document A/55/996. In it the Secretary-General set forth a clear and forthright vision for the work of the IPU with regard to its support for, and parliamentary contribution to, the United Nations, and he also expresses the hope that cooperative ties between both organizations will be strengthened and become more formal.

We would like to express our gratitude to the delegation of India for its introduction of the draft resolutions under this item. The first deals with the possibility of granting observer status to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, and the second properly deals with cooperation between the two organizations.

In the course of its 112 years of existence the Inter-Parliamentary Union has carried out fruitful work in the areas of democracy, peace, human rights and international law, to name just a few. This global organization, which counts among its members not just national parliaments but also regional parliamentary assemblies, now includes 140 countries, including our own. As a reflection of its great importance to our region, it also has five associate members, including three regional parliaments of the American continent — namely, the Latin American Parliament, the Andean Parliament and the Central American Parliament.

In addition, that importance is taking on a renewed character at the present time of evolving international relations, when new working methods and new actors are involved to enrich and make more effective the development of international cooperation and its results. At a time when, more than ever before, we need a strengthened United Nations to be at the centre of international efforts to achieve international peace and cooperation, the contribution that organizations such as the IPU can make towards this task is undeniable.

As has been pointed out on other occasions, the culture of peace being promoted by the Secretary-General — to which we are committed — requires the joint involvement and effective cooperation of various entities. In that regard, the contribution that the IPU has been making to foster peace and democracy is decisive. Elected parliaments, which constitute the expression of the sovereignty of peoples, contribute in

their turn to articulating the desires of those peoples with regard to international matters. By the same token, following through on intergovernmental acts is indispensable to guarantee the rights and freedoms of peoples, as well as peace and stability for them — conditions that are indispensable to their harmonious development.

However, perhaps the most obvious and relevant contribution made thus far involves the series of contacts and political negotiations that have been taking place under the aegis of IPU conferences. Those contacts and negotiations have come to be known as parliamentary diplomacy, given the favourable impact such negotiations can have in terms of preventing and peacefully settling disputes.

On the other hand, the commitment of States to ensure respect for the norms of international law, particularly those regarding the promotion of and respect for human rights and international humanitarian rights, no doubt draw strength from the substantive backing that the IPU can continue to give the United Nations by ensuring, through national parliaments, the conformity of member countries' legislation with international treaties entered into in the context of the United Nations. At the same time, this can ensure the close attention required in instances where constitutions provide for those treaties to come into force. This is one of the ways that parliamentary diplomacy has great importance at the national level.

At a time of change, when we are seeking to strengthen the United Nations to adapt it to these changes and make it a more effective instrument to achieve its priorities, it is unthinkable to bypass the parliamentary perspective, through which we can have access to the world's opinions and political inclinations. The IPU gives that parliamentary dimension to the United Nations by bringing to it the opinions of its peoples, which is so useful and necessary to making the United Nations more democratic. Heads of State and Government recognized that need in the Millennium Declaration, and therefore decided to continue to strengthen cooperation between the two organizations.

Venezuela recognizes the importance of the role being carried out by parliamentary diplomacy in international relations, and has positively supported the efforts made at the United Nations to effectively strengthen that cooperation. It is for this reason that we are pleased with the recommendations in this regard made by the Secretary-General in his report contained in document A/55/996. It is also for that reason that we are very pleased to endorse the initiative to grant observer status to the Inter-Parliamentary Union. In this connection, we trust that this objective can be achieved at the next session of the General Assembly.

Before concluding my statement, my delegation would like to take this opportunity to state its support for the various draft resolutions put before the General Assembly under the sub-items of the agenda item entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations", given the beneficial effect such cooperation has on the revitalization and efficiency of our Organization.

Ms. Novotná (Slovakia): At the outset let me thank the Secretary-General for his reports on cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations, which give an impressive account of the broad scope of cooperation with those organizations. Slovakia wishes to support the Secretary-General's call for enhanced cooperation and coordination and for a pragmatic division of work, with the aim of avoiding needless competition between institutions and ensuring the efficient use of resources. All of us, the Member States, bear a particular responsibility in this respect.

In our deliberations on this item, my delegation wishes to give special attention to the strengthening of cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Allow me therefore to take this opportunity to welcome to New York the Secretary General of the OSCE, Mr. Jan Kubiš. His presence at our plenary meeting today proves the growing tendency towards closer and more efficient cooperation between our two organizations.

The Slovak delegation shares the conclusions of the Secretary-General contained in his report, in particular that cooperation between the OSCE and the United Nations has continued to prosper over the last few years. However, the success of the cooperation between the two organizations will be measured by its contribution to improving the lives of the people in our countries and by how it responds to their needs and hopes.

There are many specific challenges for the United Nations and the OSCE in the prevention, settlement

and management of conflicts. We have to mention South-Eastern Europe in particular. History has shown that there is no security in Europe as long as there is instability in this part of the European continent.

We highly appreciate the work done by both the United Nations and the OSCE missions in Kosovo, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, in preparation for elections. We believe that the recent parliamentary elections in Kosovo represent a step forward towards multi-ethnic coexistence and towards creating security and democracy in the region. We appeal to elected leaders to adopt a constructive approach to make real progress in the inter-ethnic dialogue and improve the living conditions of all the inhabitants of the province as soon as possible.

We also appreciate the fact that, following the recent terrorist attacks, countries and international organizations have manifested their determination and capacity to closely cooperate and coordinate their actions in the fight against the evil of terrorism. Slovakia is ready to be a firm and active partner in this struggle. We welcome the adoption of the Bucharest Action Plan on combating terrorism, and believe that its implementation will be a concrete and timely contribution to worldwide efforts in this field. Slovakia is party to practically all the relevant legal instruments on fighting terrorism. In the near future we will ratify the United Nations Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism, which we signed early this year.

In conclusion, let me reiterate my country's conviction that the future of world peace and security depends, to a large extent, on comprehensive United Nations cooperation with regional organizations. The OSCE and the United Nations are natural partners in their common efforts for peace, democracy and prosperity. It is in the interest of all of us to further strengthen this close cooperation and partnership.

Mr. Gatilov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation has consistently supported the comprehensive development and improvement of cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other international organizations, in keeping with Chapter VIII of the Charter. We are convinced that that cooperation should provide a framework, within which the lead role is played by the main international Organization, with due attention being given to the comparative advantages of regional players. We also feel that the scope of such cooperation should be extremely broad — spanning from conflict prevention and resolution to the promotion of socio-economic development, to combating the HIV/AIDS epidemic and eliminating poverty, crime and disease.

Joint efforts by the international community to combat international terrorism have created a radically new challenge and dimension to the relationship between the United Nations and regional organizations. In this connection, we believe it essential to continue to follow a consistent policy of further strengthening and improving cooperation between the United Nations and international organizations whose activities are in keeping with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. We are in favour of institutionalizing the various forms of such cooperation, as well as making more effective use of the opportunities and resources of regional organizations, particularly in the area of peacekeeping — with the United Nations Security Council having the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. We believe that the practice of having regular meetings between the senior officials of the Secretariat and leading regional organizations is extremely useful. We also favour developing this practice further.

On the whole, Russia commends the level of cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). By way of example, I wish to refer to Tajikistan, Kosovo, Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. We believe that, with the United Nations retaining its leading role, the most promising area of cooperation between the United Nations and the OSCE is that of increasing global and regional efforts to, among other things, counter new threats to security in Europe and combat international terrorism, aggressive nationalism, organized crime and the illegal drug trade.

Recently, a regular meeting of the OSCE Council of Ministers was held in Bucharest, in which representatives of the 55 member States took part. Discussions were constructive on the whole. The documents of the meeting and the statements by representatives of the member States reflected the general view on the changing situation in the world and the firm intention to come together to counter the new threats to security in the twenty-first century, above all, international terrorism. The key conditions of such

cooperation should be genuine partnership, based on sovereign equality and solidarity among States, full compliance with the Charter, the principles of the Helsinki Conference Final Act and the interests of all OSCE States. As a basis for interaction between States in this area, the Council of Ministers adopted a resolution and plan of action for strengthening the role of the OSCE in the fight against terrorism.

An agreement was reached on a balanced document concerning the situation in South-East Europe, which defined the main thrust of OSCE activities for the restoration and development of that region, on the basis of respect for territorial integrity, the inviolability of borders, the sovereignty of States and the maintenance of their multi-ethnic nature.

We fully appreciate the results of cooperation between the United Nations agencies and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in the social and economic spheres, in particular on issues of transportation and communication networks, trade, investment, industrial and agricultural development and combating drugs. We consider this cooperation important primarily in order to promote the integration into the world economy of the member States of the OECD, of which six are also members of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

We believe it necessary to strengthen cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity so as to resolve more effectively issues relating to ensuring peace, stability and sustainable development in African countries. In particular, it is important to preserve the experience that has been gained through cooperation at a stage when the Organization of African Unity is being transformed into the African Union, as well as to raise the level of cooperation, focusing attention on coordinating international efforts and mobilizing resources in the interest of resolving the most urgent tasks facing the African continent.

Russia supports the efforts undertaken by the Organization to strengthen the peacemaking potential of Africa, which has been achieved through training for professionals, information exchanges, joint military exercises and demining programmes, as well as through the United Nations standby arrangements system and the establishment of effective partnerships and cooperation in the field of peacekeeping.

In the framework of cooperation with the Organization of African Unity and subregional African structures, we consider it appropriate to carry out comprehensive United Nations programmes in coordination with the Economic and Social Council for, on one hand, mine clearance, measures to eliminate small arms and demobilization and reintegration of former combatants and, on the other, strengthening democratic institutions, support for social and economic reform, strengthening national institutions of government and guaranteeing the primacy of law.

We also trust that the cooperation of the United Nations with the Economic Community of Central African States will help to turn the latter into an instrument of effective economic integration and the fight against poverty in countries of the subregion.

As regards Latin America, we believe in the usefulness of the United Nations providing assistance to countries of the region on questions of economic cooperation and development on the basis of agreements between the United Nations and the Latin American Economic System, given that virtually all States, including Cuba, participate in it. We are also in favour of strengthening the coordination of the activities of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and other institutions of the United Nations system on questions of cooperation with the Latin American Economic System.

We attach great significance to developing cooperation between the United Nations and such an important stakeholder of global civil society as the Inter-Parliamentary Union. We commend the 105th Inter-Parliamentary Conference, held in Havana this April. We consider that the decisions taken in that inter-parliamentary forum are of significant help to the activities of the United Nations in the areas of the fight against terrorism, the protection of cultural heritage, the observance of principles of international law, the attainment of gender equality and other matters.

On the whole, we believe that the success of the development of cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations will be a major factor in determining how effectively the world community deals with the many challenges of our times.

Mr. Wenaweser (Liechtenstein): Unsurprisingly, the issue of terrorism, which has dominated much of

our work for the past three months in New York, has also had a great influence on the activities of the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). In this regard, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, which Liechtenstein had the honour to chair from May to November this year, has identified three cornerstones in the fight against terrorism: intensifying legal cooperation to combat terrorism, safeguarding fundamental values, and investing in democracy. Legal cooperation is necessary to ensure that terrorists are brought to justice and that activities that facilitate terrorism, in particular the financing of terrorism, are stopped at an early stage and eventually prevented altogether. Fundamental values and human rights must be safeguarded at all times, especially in the context of the fight against terrorism. And while the manifestations of terrorism must never be tolerated, its root causes must also be addressed. Through its tradition of active support for democracy, human rights, and the rule of law, the Council of Europe is uniquely positioned to make a substantial contribution in the fight against terrorism.

The efforts of the OSCE in the fight against terrorism complement those of the Council of Europe and of the United Nations. In the Bucharest Plan of Action for combating terrorism, adopted just this week, the OSCE calls upon all States participating in the OSCE to ratify, where possible, the 12 international terrorism conventions by the end of 2002, and to implement Security Council resolution 1373 (2001). The Bucharest Plan of Action calls for an exchange of best practices in the area of law enforcement and prevention of terrorism and stresses the need to address the socio-economic root causes of terrorism. Like the Council of Europe, the OSCE is willing and able to provide technical assistance in the implementation of instruments in the fight against terrorism. The OSCE and the Council of Europe have worked closely together in the past few months to coordinate their efforts to combat terrorism, and there is great potential for tripartite cooperation among the Council of Europe, the OSCE and the United Nations in this area, including, in particular, with the Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC).

The past decade has seen the emergence of armed conflict in Europe on a scale not seen since World War II. The OSCE has made important contributions to containing these conflicts, in close cooperation with the United Nations. Most recently, the OSCE has been an essential participant in the activities of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo. The successfully completed elections held in Kosovo on 17 November demonstrated the effectiveness of cooperation between the two organizations, ranging from voter registration and voter services to administration of the elections themselves. The Council of Europe, in turn, played an essential role in monitoring the elections.

As is well known, the Council of Europe served as the preparatory body of the European region for the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance in Durban, which was particularly appropriate since the Council has long-standing expertise in combating racism. It has also decided to contribute actively to the implementation of the outcome of the Durban Conference. Regrettably, the Durban document has not been issued yet and a first follow-up meeting of the Council of Europe had therefore to be postponed. We hope that the documentation can be released shortly so that the substantive work on implementation can begin as soon as possible.

While crime prevention has gained particular significance in the area of terrorism, other important strides have been made recently in the area of criminal justice. On 23 November, the Council of Europe opened for signature the Convention on Cybercrime. This Convention is focused on protecting network and user security, without which the potential offered by the Internet would be fatally compromised. The Convention of the Council of Europe could prove a useful tool for the United Nations, since internet security is obviously an issue of global importance. We recall in this context that the United Nations General Assembly has again addressed the issue this year in the resolution entitled "Combating the criminal misuse of information technology".

The International Criminal Court is a perfect example to illustrate the value of the contribution of the Council of Europe to work undertaken by the United Nations. The ratification process is well under way, with 47 instruments of ratification deposited with the Secretary-General. The Council of Europe has held several meetings, the most recent on 12 and 13 September this year, to allow for an exchange on issues related to ratification and implementation of the Statute. Given the complexity of its provisions, the

exchange of expertise is invaluable and a contribution both to the early entry into force of the Statute and to the effective application of its provisions once the Court becomes operational.

One of the most timely initiatives of the United Nations in recent years has been that of dialogue among civilizations. The General Assembly debate on 8 and 9 November this year demonstrated the potential that such a dialogue has to strengthen the mutual understanding of and exchange of ideas on our cultures and societies. The Council of Europe and the OSCE, in their own dialogue conducted in Liechtenstein on 30 October, emphasized the importance of this and similar initiatives. This is yet another occasion on which tripartite cooperation could prove most helpful, not least in our common fight against terrorism.

Mr. Mannan (Bangladesh): At the very outset, let me express our deep appreciation for the way Mr. Han Seung-soo has been guiding the issue of cooperation between the United Nations and other international and regional organizations.

Bangladesh would like to focus on the issue of the relation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). As rightly mentioned by the Secretary-General on 4 December 2001 at this year's IPU convocation, member States should seriously consider strengthening cooperation between these two significant world bodies, keeping in view the maximum possible benefit that can come out of the joint efforts of law-makers and Government functionaries.

Bangladesh welcomes the report of the Secretary-General on cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union. We very much appreciate the inputs given by the various Parliaments around the world to the successful holding of the Millennium Summit, the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, the special session of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS and the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. We also look forward to further inputs at the forthcoming international conferences and special sessions on such issues as financing for development and children and sustainable development, all of which will take place during the year 2002.

On the question of peace and security, Bangladesh reiterates its unequivocal support for the cause of Palestine and hopes that, in the near future, we will be able to reach a peaceful solution to the Middle East conflict. We strongly believe that bloodshed can never bring the desired result; it only gives birth to more bloodshed and continued hatred.

Bangladesh welcomes the contribution of IPU to the ongoing debate on securing observance of international law in the interest of world peace and security and we further appreciate the work taken up by IPU in the past few months to promote parliamentary awareness of the importance of securing respect for international humanitarian law. In this regard, we commend its publication of the handbook "Respect for International Humanitarian Law" for parliamentarians, in collaboration with the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Bangladesh is a country where, over the last 10 years, democracy has planted its roots firmly. This has been the combined result of the last three consecutive parliamentary elections. Like many other countries, we are also committed to good governance. Our Government is making a concerted effort to ensure the participation of women at all levels of policy-making and execution. Moreover, Bangladesh is not only a signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, but also one of its active promoters. We as a nation always try to uphold all forms of human rights.

Whereas the United Nations is a union of States, the IPU is basically a union of Parliaments or, for that matter, a union of Governments prevailing at a particular time. The unique State character of IPU is supportive of this phenomenon. A great opportunity therefore exists to harvest immense benefit out of interactions between the United Nations and IPU.

The question may often be asked as to what came first: the chicken or the egg. In the fitness of things, the answer should be: Where there are no chickens, there are no eggs; and where there are no eggs, there are no chickens, either. Therefore, in a similar analogy, where there are no States, there are no Governments and where there are no good Governments, there are no good States. A good Government can obviously sprout out of a good Parliament.

Therefore, in order to have a viable and worthwhile State, it is a precondition to have a good Parliament. As a matter of fact, both the United Nations and IPU can complement each other in a great

many fields. It is through this concept and perception that the growing demand is to gain momentum for intensive interaction between the two.

Bangladesh supports the proposal of the Secretary-General to establish a special relationship of cooperation between the United Nations and IPU through the granting of observer status to the latter. We are also appreciative of the fact that this matter has already gained the broad-based support of the Member States. We firmly believe that this gesture from the General Assembly will have a positive outcome for the world at large by bringing two very important actors of everyday life to the same table. Therefore, we are of the view that something concrete on this issue should be done at the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly and, for that purpose, my delegation is ready to participate in further consultations in the coming months.

Mr. Ahmad (Pakistan): We are discussing today the cooperation between the United Nations and various regional and other organizations. I think it was an ingenious decision to lump together the whole list of organizations; this lumping together, hopefully, will remove some of the lumps from within the United Nations system in terms of the wastage of time and resources that we have been witnessing over the years. This was a good move and we welcome it.

I would make only a few remarks on the cooperation between the United Nations and two organizations with which Pakistan has the privilege of being closely associated: the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO).

The OIC is one of the largest intergovernmental organizations, comprising 56 members and four observer States and representing the Islamic world as its collective voice. The organization aims at promoting solidarity and cooperation among all its members in the political, economic and social spheres. It has been engaged over the years in a constructive and cooperative relationship with the United Nations and other international organizations, reinforcing common endeavours in pursuit of peace and development. I must praise the important role and work that is being performed by the OIC observer mission here, headed by Ambassador Lamani.

In accordance with the cardinal precepts of Islam, which is a religion of peace and tolerance, a religion of justice and equality, the OIC has endeavoured to promote a better understanding and dialogue between and among different civilizations and cultures. The OIC has taken significant measures in not only creating worldwide awareness of Islam, but also in fostering peace, in promoting social and economic development, in combating ethnic or racial intolerance and in seeking an end to the causes of injustice and instability, which are a constant threat to world peace and stability.

The need to promote this cross-cultural understanding and mutual amity was never as acute as it is today. The tragic events of 11 September underscore the need to further strengthen the cooperation between the Islamic world and the international community in the common fight against the scourge of international terrorism by identifying and addressing its root causes. For its part, the OIC has always condemned terrorism and has adopted its own convention to deal with this challenge. This convention represents a comprehensive framework with a clear definition of terrorism. The OIC convention, upholding the United Nations Charter's cardinal principle of self-determination and acknowledging the legitimacy of freedom struggles against foreign occupation and alien domination, could offer a useful model in evolving a similar international convention on terrorism.

We are pleased to refer to the report of the Secretary-General on cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference, which summarizes the progress achieved during the past year by the United Nations system and the OIC in promoting their shared goals of international peace and security and development. We welcome the effective contacts and consultations that the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference have maintained on a number of current political issues, including Kashmir, Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, the Middle East and Palestine. Their mutually supportive role and determination to promote negotiations to resolve these conflicts continue to receive wide international support.

It is also gratifying to note that cooperation between the United Nations system and the Organization of the Islamic Conference is also increasing in a wide range of socio-economic areas of mutual interest. We are of the view that the two sides should continue to examine ways and means of further expanding and diversifying their cooperation by

identifying new areas. Enhanced cooperation would benefit the peoples of the States members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the United Nations.

Pakistan has the proud privilege of chairing one of the two main committees of OIC: the Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation (COMSTECH), which is responsible for promoting cooperation in the fields of science and technology amongst the Muslim countries. The President of Pakistan is its ex officio Chairman and, in that capacity, is hosting the tenth General Assembly session of COMSTECH in Islamabad in February next year. This session will mark an important event by contributing to enhancing scientific and technological cooperation amongst the Islamic countries and to helping develop an effective OIC institutional mechanism for research and development.

The Bonn Agreement on a transitional set-up for Afghanistan is indeed a welcome development on which we congratulate the Secretary-General and his Special Representative, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi. This shows that, where there is a will, there is a way. No problem in the world, howsoever intractable it may seem, is unsolvable. We hope that the United Nations will now show similar commitment and involvement in facilitating a final settlement of some of the other major outstanding issues afflicting the world and threatening world peace and security. The OIC would be a willing partner in facilitating the efforts to find a just and equitable settlement of two major outstanding issues — the Palestine issue and the Kashmir issue — both of which are on the agendas of the United Nations and OIC.

In both cases, the people are awaiting an opportunity to exercise their inalienable right of self-determination. Neither question involves drawing lines on the map. They essentially involve the destiny and future of the peoples concerned — in the case of Kashmir, more than 12 million people and, in the case of Palestine, more than 3 million. In both cases, Security Council resolutions remain unimplemented and have remained unimplemented for decades. We hope that the United Nations and OIC can join together in finding an early end to these disputes on the basis of justice and international legality and in conformity with the legitimate aspirations of the peoples of Palestine and Kashmir.

The Economic Cooperation Organization is a regional cooperation organization seeking to promote the socio-economic development of its member States on the basis of their common needs and in keeping with the challenges taking place on the global economic scene.

I am personally privileged to have been associated with ECO as its Secretary-General for four years during its formative and expansive phase. Originally a trilateral entity of Iran, Pakistan and Turkey, ECO was enlarged in November 1992 to include seven new members: Afghanistan, five newly independent Republics of Central Asia and Azerbaijan. ECO today is a major regional organization of 10 member States, which are bound together by geography, history and culture and also share a common vision for their future — a future of peace and prosperity. I would mention here that the ECO region covers a territory of more than 7 million square kilometres and includes a population of nearly 350 million people. It is the second largest regional organization after the European Union and represents one of those regions which are extremely rich, not only in human resources, but also in natural and material resources.

Unfortunately, the real potential of the Economic Cooperation Organization has not been fully realized because of the protracted internecine conflict in Afghanistan. Now that there is at last a glimmer of hope for peace in Afghanistan, ECO can serve as a vehicle not only for the post-war reconstruction of Afghanistan, but also for developing and integrating the economies of the region, which have borne the brunt of the conflict in Afghanistan. ECO already has in place comprehensive blueprints for the region-wide development of transport and communications infrastructure, facilitation of trade and investment, banking and insurance, culture and education and effective use of the region's vast energy resources. These blueprints are already there; they just have to be implemented once the situation in Afghanistan returns to tranquillity. Once peace returns to Afghanistan, the organization will, in our view, have the opportunity of realizing these blueprints for the benefit not just of the region, but also of the world beyond. In this task, we hope to work closely with all those countries which are interested in the reconstruction work in Afghanistan.

I would like to conclude by expressing our confidence that the cooperation of the United Nations

with both the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Economic Cooperation Organization will continue to flourish to the benefit of the member States. Pakistan is proud of its affiliation with the United Nations, the OIC and the ECO. It remains actively involved in the work of all three and will continue to support closer cooperation and coordination between the United Nations system and these two important organizations, which represent a very large segment of the total world population.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I call on the representative of the Netherlands to introduce draft resolution A/56/L.30.

Mr. Van den Berg (Netherlands): Yesterday, the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), Ambassador Bustani, addressed this Assembly and made a comprehensive statement.

Sub-item (l) of agenda item 21 addresses cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. The organization has chosen the Netherlands for its headquarters and, as the representative of the host country, I feel honoured and privileged to introduce to this Assembly draft resolution A/56/L.30, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons".

I should like to stress that the draft resolution before us is entirely procedural, as will appear by going through its paragraphs. In the first preambular paragraph, the General Assembly notes its resolution 55/283 of 7 September 2001, in which it approved the Agreement concerning the Relationship between the United Nations and the organization. In the second preambular paragraph, the Assembly acknowledges receipt of the annual report of the organization.

In the three operative paragraphs, the Assembly welcomes the entry into force of the Agreement concerning the Relationship between the United Nations and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons; takes note of the annual report of the organization provided by the Director-General; and decides to include in the provisional agenda of its fifty-seventh session the sub-item entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons".

In view of the strictly procedural nature of this draft resolution, it is the hope of my delegation that the Assembly may wish to adopt it by consensus.

Mr. Jalang'o (Kenya): Let me begin by extending to the President our deep appreciation for the excellent manner in which he has conducted this session.

My delegation wishes to associate itself with the report of the Secretary-General on the sub-item 21 (j), on cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity (A/56/489), as requested in Assembly resolution 55/218. Indeed, the adoption of this particular resolution was in keeping with our collective resolve to enhance the role of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in all United Nations activities concerning Africa, a position that Kenya is proud to associate itself with.

We acknowledge the fact that the development of the African continent will ultimately depend on the ownership of development policies and commitment of the African leaders and peoples. The cooperation between OAU and the United Nations is expected to assume fresh dynamism following the collective decision of the heads of State and Government to transform the OAU into the African Union during their thirty-eighth Assembly, in Lusaka. This important development will bring about the revitalization of the organization in both orientation and institutional structure.

In addition, the launching of the New African Initiative, now referred to as New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), in Lusaka, bears eloquent testimony to the commitment and determination of our people in the pursuit of sustainable development. The initiative is a home-grown approach to Africa's development that recognizes the peculiarities of our development needs. My delegation wishes to call for international support, including that of United Nations agencies, in promoting the activities of NEPAD in macroeconomic and sustainable development of the African continent.

Development can be achieved only in an atmosphere of peace, stability and security. The escalation of conflicts in Africa has eroded development gains that we have made over the years. It has recently been established that conflict situations are also havens for the illegal exploitation of Africa's natural resources.

To stem the tide of chaos, Kenya supports the role of the United Nations in the area of peace and security. We fully welcome any form of collaboration between the United Nations and the OAU in preventive diplomacy, particularly in the operations of peace missions in the African region. I wish to add that Kenya will continue to participate in various peacekeeping operations whenever called upon.

However, in the same vein, Kenya urges the strengthening of United Nations peacekeeping, particularly with regard to reimbursement. Kenya appreciates the United Nations efforts in reimbursing troop costs to troop-contributing countries, but at the same time we lament the serious delays in reimbursement for contingent-owned equipment. We must acknowledge the fact that delays in reimbursement cause great hardship to all troop- and equipment-contributing countries, especially developing countries.

My delegation welcomes the efforts of the United Nations to promote peace in the Great Lakes region. We support the deployment of United Nations peacekeeping forces in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and we remain confident that the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo will work closely with the OAU in the framework of the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement for tangible peace.

Kenya has been in the forefront in the search for peace in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa, especially in southern Sudan and Somalia, and it remains our conviction that no sustainable development could be achieved in an atmosphere of war and conflicts. Kenya therefore calls upon the United Nations to lend support to regional and subregional initiatives for early warning and response mechanisms with a view to enhancing our capacity for conflict prevention and management.

Kenya reiterates the importance of the role of regional organizations in conflict resolution, preventive diplomacy and peacemaking. However, closer cooperation between the regional organizations, including OAU and the United Nations, should be encouraged.

At the same time, the humanitarian and emergency situations in Africa seem to elicit a slow response from the international community. While Kenya continues to shoulder an enormous burden from the influx of refugees from neighbouring countries, we call for international support in alleviating the burden. The United Nations and the OAU need to collaborate in building Africa's capacity to mitigate both natural and man-made disasters. Kenya draws the attention of the international community, particularly the United Nations system, to the need for Africa to be equipped with a mechanism for rapid response to disasters on the continent, especially as it involves disaster preparedness, prevention and management.

Kenya further urges the United Nations to provide funding to host a symposium in Africa and to consider eventually establishing a rapid emergency response mechanism on the continent. We hold the view that international solidarity is necessary in the prevention of the basic factors that give rise to refugees and displaced persons, and we urge closer coordination and monitoring of global efforts to address the entire range of humanitarian crises.

I am pleased to inform the Assembly that, through the Symposium Golden Spear 2000-2001, held in Nairobi, we have embarked on a process of regional consultation, cooperation and collective action aimed at addressing issues of disasters affecting the eastern and southern regions of Africa. We could share this experience in building regional capacity with the United Nations.

Kenya is deeply concerned with the question of excessive availability, accumulation and illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons. These weapons threaten human security and hinder socio-economic development and political stability. It is therefore imperative that the global community take decisive steps to alleviate this problem. Kenya reaffirms its commitment to work hand in hand with the United Nations, the OAU and other regional organizations to stem this problem.

My delegation appreciates the role of the United Nations in working closely with OAU to enhance the implementation of the Abuja Treaty. Specifically, Kenya calls for deepening the engagement between the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and the OAU in the implementation of the New Global Compact with Africa, and in addressing development priorities in the areas of health, education, HIV/AIDS prevention, human resource development, information and other poverty-alleviation initiatives.

Most African countries are still amongst the poorest in the world. Out of the 34 least developed countries in the world, 29 are from Africa. Implementation of the Agenda for Development is expected to reduce existing fundamental imbalances and inequalities. The concerns of developing countries, especially in Africa, should be considered in future international deliberations on international financing for development and at the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa), Vice-President, took the Chair.

There is no doubt in our minds that the process of globalization and the rapid transformation of the international economic environment is marginalizing sub-Saharan Africa. We call upon the United Nations agencies, in collaboration with OAU, to play a more effective role in reducing the negative impact of globalization. In this regard, regional integration in the promotion of economic growth must be encouraged and supported.

In conclusion, my delegation is optimistic that the collaboration between the OAU and the United Nations in the implementation of the development agenda for Africa and in meeting the targets of the Millennium Declaration on poverty eradication will eventually bring Africa's sustainable development to fruitful realization.

Mr. Theron (Namibia): The sub-agenda items that we are addressing under agenda item 21 are of immense value and importance to the full achievement of the goals of the United Nations and the organizations in question. Through cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations, better understandings are created, and the roles and effectiveness of both sides are strengthened. This in turn help the international community to better address the multiple and diverse challenges, such as terrorism, poverty, global epidemics and conflicts, that we are facing today. With these results, it is logical that we should encourage even more regular cooperation and consultations than is currently the case between the United Nations and the respective regional and other organizations.

I shall limit my comments today to just a few of the organizations currently cooperating with the United Nations, and I want to thank the Secretary-General for the enlightening and comprehensive reports he has submitted on the various subjects.

I would first like to address the cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). The Inter-Parliamentary Union has continued to fulfil its unique role internationally by contributing to the work of the United Nations in a number of areas. The IPU, as illustrated by the Secretary-General in his report, has participated in diverse areas such as peace and security, economic and social development, international law and human rights, democracy, governance and gender issues. The Union has been successful in bridging the gaps that sometimes exist between the United Nations and entities at the national level by effectively promoting the goals and objectives of the organization.

It thus managed to play a significant role in world affairs as a result of this close and productive relationship with the United Nations. This relationship needs to be strengthened, and my delegation is hopeful that the new and special relationship between the IPU and the United Nations will be realized soon.

The African Union will have a Pan-African Parliament as one of its main organs. We look forward to its establishment, since we believe that it, too, through the IPU and in cooperation with the United Nations, will be able to assist immensely in addressing the problems of the continent and the world.

With regard to the cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity (OAU), my delegation associates itself with the statement by the Zambian delegation on behalf of the OAU. Africa today continues to carry the burden of too many conflicts and other social and economic problems. However, the continent has also proved its determination to take charge of the situation and bring it to normalcy. A recent example of these steps is the adoption of the New African Initiative, now called the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). It is obvious, however, that these noble objectives cannot be realized without the assistance of international partners.

In this regard, it is heartening to note the extent to which the international community has already embraced some of these initiatives. The United Nations adopted the historic Millennium Declaration, through which Member States undertook to assist Africa in its economic and other recovery efforts. We are optimistic

that these initiatives will achieve the intended goals soon. The Secretary-General has reported that the programme of cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity constituted one of the most extensive programmes so far. While this situation is commendable, it should be strengthened and expanded even further, since the OAU and subregional organizations are actively involved in addressing the many conflicts and other challenges in Africa, which form part of the agenda of the United Nations.

During the period under review, the Constitutive Act of the African Union entered into force. With the establishment of the African Union, the continent will achieve better economic and political integration for the benefit of all its members. It is our view that such integration will also lead to improved cooperation and coordination with the United Nations. In this regard, my delegation looks forward to the completion of the proposed review of the United Nations/OAU programme of cooperation. The review is to determine how this programme can be adapted to support the OAU, as it develops the structural concept of the new African Union and seeks to establish the new institutions that this may call for.

Yesterday, the Executive Secretary of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization and the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons provided us with intriguing reports on the work and progress of their respective organizations. Security threats are increasing internationally, and we believe that the world should speak with one voice when it comes to issues of disarmament and international security. Both the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons represent pragmatic and concrete measures to rid the world of weapons of mass destruction.

We therefore support the strengthening of cooperation between these organizations and the United Nations. In particular, we welcome the adoption of a partnership agreement between the Preparatory Commission for the CTBTO and the United Nations and the conclusion of cooperation agreements with the United Nations, specialized agencies and programmes. Furthermore, the recently convened second Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty was successful in reaffirming the importance of nuclear non-proliferation and its role within the framework of the United Nations.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate that the challenges the international community is facing today require us to work together, with all the resources available, for the benefit of humankind. We should not let these opportunities pass, and one way to prevent this would be to increase the interaction and cooperation between the United Nations and various regional and other organizations.

Miss Durrant (Jamaica): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the members of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States on sub-item 21 (a), on cooperation between the United Nations and the Latin American Economic System.

We are grateful for the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/56/171, which has been submitted in accordance with resolution 54/8, and we welcome the progress made in cooperation between the Latin American Economic System (SELA) and the organizations, funds, programmes and agencies of the United Nations system, especially the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.

Since the adoption of resolution 54/8 on 25 October 1999, SELA has taken a series of decisions that are worth mentioning here, which complement the information in the Secretary-General's report. The work programmes for the period 1999-2001 covered a range of activities aimed at technical and regional cooperation among countries in the region, as well as extraregional activities.

Over the past year we have experienced increased cooperation in support of Latin American and Caribbean Member States in the areas of training and promotion and provision of technical cooperation for developing countries, with actions to support smaller countries in the region based on their requests. Within the region there have been considerable efforts to promote, create and encourage coordination of regional cooperation activities by integrating the activities undertaken by various regional and international specialized organizations.

In the area of extraregional relations, particular attention was given to agricultural negotiations, through the conduct of several studies and joint

programmes with the World Bank and with the collaboration of the Andean Development Corporation. Insofar as intraregional relations are concerned, SELA has stressed the importance of regional integration. In this regard, I wish to highlight the importance of actions taken as part of the IBERPYME (Ibero-American programme of inter-agency cooperation for small and medium-sized businesses) programme in the field of decentralization and to support small businesses and medium-sized businesses.

At the recent meeting of the Latin American Council, held in Caracas from 8 to 10 October this year, the work programme for 2002 was approved. It is our hope that the activities proposed by the Council will further strengthen the goals of the region in its efforts to promote economic and social development.

I wish to inform the Assembly that a draft resolution entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Latin American Economic System" will be introduced at a later date. The members of the Latin American and Caribbean Group hope that, as in previous years, the draft resolution will enjoy the consensus of the Member States of the United Nations, thereby reflecting the spirit of cooperation so important to us all.

Mr. Valera (Mexico) *(spoke in Spanish)*: My delegation would like to support fully the statement delivered by the representative of Jamaica, speaking on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean States members of the Latin American Economic System.

In the discussion of the item before us, my delegation would like to pay special attention to the sub-item on cooperation between the United Nations and the Pacific Islands Forum.

Mexico is aware of the changes occurring on the world scene and the challenges posed by the growing globalization in the various areas of international life, among which stands out the need to strengthen multilateralism as one of the best forms of cooperation to achieve integration, stability, prosperity, conflict prevention and the maintenance of international peace and security.

Mexico shares with the small island nations and the countries of the Pacific their historic tradition as a region of peace, tolerance and cultural diversity. At the same time, it upholds respect for the rule of the law and democratic principles, as well as respect for international law. This is why there is a community of interests linking the islands of the Pacific and Mexico on issues such as nuclear disarmament and nuclear-weapons-free zones, the maritime transport of radioactive and toxic materials and hazardous substances, climatic change and global warming, conservation of the environment, the multilateral fishing regime in the Pacific, the prohibition of whaling, and whale sanctuaries, among other things.

We also share with the island States the desire to contribute to the integral development of our peoples, consolidate democratic institutions, economic growth, environmental conservation, economic, scientific and technological cooperation, the promotion of the culture of peace, the peaceful settlement of disputes, disarmament, and the strengthening of cooperation with other States, regional organizations and the United Nations.

Therefore, Mexico welcomes the inclusion of a new item on the agenda of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Pacific Islands Forum", to the extent that this will facilitate cooperation between the Member States of the United Nations and the member countries of the Forum, as well as with other regional organizations.

It is also in this spirit that Mexico is co-sponsoring draft resolution A/56/L.29, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Pacific Islands Forum", and hopes that it will be adopted by consensus by the General Assembly.

Mr. Mourão (Brazil): Brazil notes with satisfaction the progress made by the General Assembly in implementing the measures adopted through resolution 55/285 for the revitalization of its working methods.

Our debate today on the item "Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations" is a result of the decision to cluster and biannualize certain agenda items. This arrangement will provide us with an overview of how the United Nations interacts with other organizations. It will also enable us to explore opportunities for synergies among these organizations and to learn from practices that may have proved particularly fruitful.

A case in point of the possibilities for enhanced cooperation is offered by the Inter-Parliamentary Union

(IPU). Since its establishment more than a century ago, the Inter Parliamentary Union has been an incremental force in promoting cooperation and understanding among parliamentarians of different nations.

In the performance of its mandate, the IPU has enhanced the goals of the United Nations. Ranging over a wide set of issues, from peace and security to human rights, from environmental concerns to economic and social development, IPU activities truly help in a significant way to enhance dialogue among societies and nations. This is a natural consequence of the ever closer interaction between domestic and international affairs in a world increasingly undergoing globalization. The advantages of this are twofold. On the one hand, it offers an opportunity for our congressmen to interact with their colleagues from across the globe. On the other hand, it enables parliamentary decisions to bolster the activities of the Organization and, as a result, ensures a broader representation of States in the work of the United Nations.

The benefits of greater cooperation between parliamentary institutions and the United Nations are tangible for Brazil, where the participation of observers in the parliament is a long-standing practice. Brazil therefore supports ongoing efforts to establish a new and strengthened relationship between the United Nations and the IPU, as suggested in the latest report by the Secretary-General. We are a sponsor of the draft resolution and look forward to future consultations on how best to enhance the unique contribution of the IPU to the work of the United Nations and to the advancement and common development of the international community as a whole.

I would also like to say a word about the cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). Brazil thanks the organization's Director-General, Ambassador José Maurício Bustani, for his presentation of a detailed report on its activities over the last year. We welcomed the progress made towards implementing this instrument of critical importance for disarmament and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. We agree with Ambassador Bustani that 2000 was the organization's most successful year in terms of program delivery.

The agreement between the United Nations and the OPCW, approved by the General Assembly last September, was an important step in the consolidation of the regime of disarmament and non-proliferation of chemical weapons, under the responsibility of OPCW. It strengthens both organizations, supports the implementation of their common objectives and benefits the international community as a whole. By promoting a convergence of efforts and the rationalization of activities and objectives between both institutions, this agreement allows the OPCW, with due regard for its specific goals and responsibilities, to become an instrument of the United Nations system.

We are confident that this agreement will facilitate the universalization of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), in our view a model Convention, as well its more effective implementation. The full implementation of the CWC must be seen as an urgent endeavour of the international community, with a view to eliminating all chemical arsenals, verifying industrial activities using sensitive chemicals, promoting increasing cooperation for peaceful uses and controlling the international exchange of sensitive chemicals.

The launching of the cooperation between both organizations could not be timelier. At this moment, when the international community, and the United Nations in particular, are faced with the challenge of identifying practical solutions to fight and prevent terrorism, the OPCW has the adequate instruments to combat and prevent chemical terrorism. Closer cooperation between both organizations is to be applauded. The chemical regime of disarmament and non-proliferation is enhanced in its effectiveness and credibility by its association with the universal Organization responsible for international peace and security.

Mr. Laotegguelnodji (Chad) *(spoke in French)*: It is with emotion that I take the floor during this debate on the draft resolution on cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), because I was one of the first officials made available to the secretariat of ECCAS to help develop and implement the objectives of integration of the markets of member States, in particular with regard to coordinating policies in the customs, trade, financial and monetary sectors.

I would like to summarize the record of ECCAS in order to emphasize the efforts and determination of

our member States to promote a real policy of economic integration.

The period 1982-1983 was one of negotiating the ECCAS treaty; during 1983-1984, the treaty was ratified by the member States; 1985 saw the entry into force of the Treaty and the establishment of the secretariat's staff; and from 1985 to 1992, the secretariat carried out the enormous task of preparing proposals for the member States in the form of juridical, commercial, customs, financial, monetary and technical instruments to develop the Community's physical and economic space, as well as to increase the production of goods and services that could provide resources for the Community's market. At the same time, concrete proposals were submitted to member States to promote the free circulation of goods, capital and nationals of the Community.

These initial efforts of economic integration of the member States of ECCAS were made possible thanks to the financial, technical and human resources assistance provided by members of the international community, among which should be cited and thanked the institutions of the United Nations system, including the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the Economic Commission for Africa; and those of the European Union, including the European Development Fund, as well as all bilateral assistance provided by Member donors of our world Organization. The report of the Secretary-General introducing the draft resolution clearly reflects the importance of the contribution made by the international community to helping to start up the Community's activities.

The establishment of ECCAS gave rise to genuine hopes for broad-scale endogenous development among all States of Central Africa, which possess, as the international community has recognized, tremendous wealth in the area of mines and forests as well as strong potential in the agricultural, energy and hydroelectric fields.

Unfortunately, from 1992 to 1998 the ECCAS entered a period of prolonged lethargy, which coincided with the political and economic difficulties faced by our member States and their adverse effects on social cohesion and national unity in the countries affected.

In 1998 a new era began for ECCAS, whose highest political authorities decided to revitalize the Community's activities.

From October to December 1998, a multidisciplinary mission of member States, led by the African Economic Community, travelled throughout the 11 member States to assess the situation and to consult decision-makers and members of civil society about existing needs in the area of socio-economic integration.

The findings of that multidisciplinary mission clearly showed that the peoples of Central Africa wanted, first and foremost and more than ever before, peace and security in order to peacefully go about their daily business of economic and social development. We cannot therefore fail to welcome the decision taken by the heads of State of the ECCAS to set up the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa (COPAX).

Taking account of this information, and in the context of the revitalization of its activities, ECCAS has since then integrated the goals of peace, security, democracy and human integration into its initial objective — multisectoral economic integration.

My delegation believes that the draft resolution before us is a real milestone for our Community. Its adoption by the Assembly will make it possible for the States of Central Africa to benefit, in the medium and long term, from the assistance and support of the international community, which is so essential for supplementing their own development efforts.

Chad, as a landlocked, least developed country, is counting on subregional and regional integration, which it believes to be key factors in its own development. My delegation therefore supports, and strongly recommends the adoption by consensus of, draft resolution A/56/L.25, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Community of Central African States."

Mr. Jegermanis (Latvia): Let me start by emphasizing the major role of the Council of Europe in the area of the promotion and protection of human rights, democracy and the rule of law within the region. The Council of Europe, as a truly pan-European organization, can advantageously perform these tasks, which are common to a number of international organizations.

Latvia welcomes the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/56/302, which indicates that the interaction between the two organizations has continued to improve. Indeed, both organizations continue to have shared interests which lend themselves to cooperation in such areas as conflict prevention, post-conflict peace-building and confidence-building measures.

As I mentioned earlier, the fundamental values of the Council of Europe are shared by other international organizations of various sizes and different natures. Discussing the specific role of the Council of Europe in a given subregion or country can be done only in the context of cooperation and division of labour with other organizations, notably with the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the European Union. All of those entities carry out complementary tasks and, in our view, should work in a mutually reinforcing fashion. We believe that the best means to achieve this is through close and frequent contacts between the headquarters of organizations and the people on the ground — as has been the case, for example, in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Latvia shares the view of the Secretary-General that the dialogue and practical cooperation established with the United Nations and its agencies on the ground should be made more politically evident. Latvia welcomes the progress made by the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in this field, as well as by the Department of Political Affairs of the United Nations. We believe that the draft resolution on cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe (A/56/L.31), introduced this year by successive chairmanships in the Council of Europe, will be an important step forward.

The Council of Europe's central task is to defend and promote the standards and principles of a democratic society. In carrying out its mission of promoting and protecting human rights in Europe, the Council of Europe is working towards the implementation of the instruments of other organizations, including the United Nations.

In our view, the accession of new countries to the Council of Europe has given a strong impetus to the promotion of democracy and stability in the region. In this regard, let me recall the accession of Armenia and of Azerbaijan to the Council of Europe at the beginning of this year, during Latvia's presidency of the Council. That was the time when the dialogue with the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia commenced and when pre-accession relations with Bosnia-Herzegovina were intensified. Those developments were facilitated by the common activities of the successive chairmanships of Liechtenstein, Lithuania and Luxembourg.

In our opinion, there is still a broad need for further cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe. The Council of Europe continues to be a useful model, developing judicial and non-judicial bodies for the effective implementation of its legal instruments. Let me mention here the European Court of Human Rights, the Venice Commission, the European Committee against Racism and Intolerance, and the Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. By this we would like to emphasize the innovative role of the Council of Europe in the development of different areas of international public and private law.

Let me conclude by expressing our hope that the cooperation that has recently begun between the United Nations and the Council of Europe in the fight against terrorism, through the harmonization of our activities in a spirit of complementarity, will mark a new stage in our mutual cooperation.

Mr. Abelian (Armenia): I am taking the floor to express the position of my country on several sub-items under agenda item 21, "Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations".

I should like to start with the sub-item on cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), since it touches upon issues that are of paramount importance to Armenia.

The Romanian chairmanship of the OSCE faced a number of challenging tasks this year. We therefore wish to express our appreciation for its efforts and for the plans for reforming the OSCE, adopted in Bucharest. We hope that the measures contained therein will successfully address some of the problems that have been gradually hobbling the OSCE.

A new, genuine spirit of global solidarity has emerged since 11 September, when the terrorist attacks on the United States revealed the vulnerability of all States. The OSCE's decision on combating terrorism

and the Bucharest Plan of Action are evidence of such solidarity. Under the Bucharest Plan of Action, OSCE States have pledged to expand existing activities in contributing to the global fight against terrorism and to increase bilateral and multilateral cooperation within the OSCE and with the United Nations and other international and regional organizations.

The OSCE is dealing with a number of regional conflicts, most of which have emerged because peoples under alien domination have been denied their legitimate and peacefully sought right to self-determination, a right which is guaranteed by international law and which was confirmed once again last year by all heads of State in the Millennium Declaration. It is obvious that a more reasonable, accurate, differentiated and therefore effective response is necessary for such conflicts.

One such conflict in need of peaceful settlement is the Nagorny Karabakh conflict, the resolution of which is one of the OSCE's important mandates, carried out through the Minsk Group. No amount of ambiguous diplomatic language can mask the fact that the people of Nagorny Karabakh have earned the right to live peacefully, free from alien domination imposed on them against their will and consent, in what for 3,000 years has been their historical homeland. In order to translate this right into reality, the Armenian side to the conflict is ready to engage in serious give-and-take and is open to mutual compromise, because we understand that the region is a place where we live together, not a place where we can stand alone, unwavering and intransigent in an illusory world. We believe that with the help of the Co-Chairmen of the OSCE Minsk Group, a forward — if tentative — movement can be registered, sustained and consolidated.

The report of the Secretary-General on cooperation between the United Nations and the OSCE in Europe presents a detailed and impressive overview of the cooperation between the two organizations. Their shared values and common goals provide a solid foundation for fruitful cooperation in a large number of fields, particularly in regions affected by ethnic conflict, where the United Nations and the OSCE complement each other very efficiently. We have also seen the positive results of this complementarity in Armenia, where the United Nations and the OSCE cooperate and supplement each other's activities in such areas as human rights, issues of statelessness, non-governmental organizations and the building of civil society. We are grateful to the Secretary-General for including in his report these joint United Nations and OSCE activities in Armenia.

In January 2001, Armenia joined the Council of Europe. We are fully cognizant that membership in that respected European body is a privilege which implies certain responsibilities. After restoring its independence in 1991, Armenia declared integration into Europe to be one of the priorities of its foreign policy and began the process of adjusting its legislation and type of governance to the standards required by the Council of Europe. Our success on that path and our eligibility for membership were recognized by the Council in 1998, but due to certain political considerations we had to wait another two years for the official invitation to join the Council.

Armenia welcomes the cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe, which is focused mainly on the protection and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as on the promotion and strengthening of the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter. We particularly welcome the interaction between the Council of Europe and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. One of most vivid manifestations of cooperation between the two organizations was the active involvement of the Council of Europe in the preparations for the World Conference against racism and racial discrimination. We hope that the same level of engagement and contribution will be maintained during the forthcoming major United Nations events. We would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Lithuania on its efficient chairmanship of the Council of Europe.

Finally, on the sub-item "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference", we would like to repeat our call for a more constructive and balanced stance on the part of that respected organization with regard to the Nagorny Karabakh conflict. We would like to reiterate that the conflict has no religious dimension and that we reject any attempt to present it as a battle between Christians and Muslims. Armenia has a long history of peaceful interaction and coexistence with Muslim countries, and we have a deep knowledge and understanding of the neighbouring Islamic civilizations. For these reasons,

we hold the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) in the highest esteem. We are ready to establish and maintain direct contact with that organization, and we once again confirm our invitation to the Secretary-General of the OIC to visit Armenia and Nagorny Karabakh.

In this respect, we would also like to note with appreciation the position of the League of Arab States, which explicitly recognized the absence of a religious background to the conflict. We believe that cooperation between the United Nations and the Arab League should include measures aimed at preventing the "villainization" of entire religions and nations — something Armenia strongly denounces.

Mr. Richards (Dominica): I have the honour to address the Assembly in this debate on agenda item 21 (a) on behalf of the 14 members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) that are Members of the United Nations: Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago and my own country, Dominica.

We associate ourselves with the statement made by the representative of Jamaica on this agenda item, and we join her in urging that the draft resolution entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Latin American and Economic System" be adopted by consensus when it is introduced in the General Assembly.

CARICOM member States wish to express their gratitude to the Secretary-General for his report contained in document A/56/171, setting forth the many aspects of continuing cooperation between the Latin American Economic System (SELA) and the United Nations system, particularly the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization.

For CARICOM member States, the importance of a regional institution like SELA is most noteworthy in areas of enhanced capacity-building through technical training and in the provision of information vital for a better understanding of the current economic trends that, for the most part, impact negatively on small States like ours. In this regard, the deepening of cooperative efforts between ECLAC and SELA, as is evident from the Secretary-General's report, is most encouraging. The joint effort undertaken in 1999 to launch "national focal points for technical cooperation among developing countries (TCDC) on the Internet" (*A/56/171, para 6*) and the training workshops organized in connection with that project is one example among many of how cooperation between SELA and the United Nations can be beneficial to the region, and to the member states of CARICOM in particular.

The role of SELA is also significant in assisting the promotion of regional and subregional integration efforts, which are essential to the development of the capacity of small States to derive some benefits from the global economy.

In its focus on extraregional and intraregional relations and regional cooperation, SELA emphasizes the likely benefits of the interdependent relations existing between the subregions of Latin America and the Caribbean, while it serves as an important link between the region and other regions of the world.

Cooperation between SELA and the United Nations serves the interest of both institutions in meeting the development needs of the peoples of the region. CARICOM hopes that the effort will not only continue, but that it will be strengthened and that, as a result, the States in the region will be better placed to meet the tremendous challenges that they are likely to face in the years ahead.

The Acting President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 44/6, of 17 October 1989, I now call on the observer for the Council of Europe.

Mr. De Jonge (Council of Europe): It is a great honour for me to address the General Assembly of the United Nations in the debate on cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations. Although it is only the second time that a report and a draft resolution on cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe figures on the agenda of the General Assembly, cooperation between our organization and the United Nations dates back to the creation of the Council of Europe. That cooperation has steadily increased since then, at both the political and operational levels. Our cooperation extends to virtually all United Nations specialized agencies and entities.

The Council of Europe contributes to advancing the objectives of the United Nations at the regional level. When we promote full implementation of the European Convention on Human Rights we are also promoting respect for the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

With the accession of Armenia and Azerbaijan earlier this year, our organization now has 43 member States. Furthermore, Canada, Japan, Mexico, the United States of America and the Holy See actively participate in our work as observers. We hope that the four remaining European countries that are not yet in the Council of Europe, all of which have applied for membership, will be able to join the organization once they can comply with the basic standards of human rights, democracy and the rule of law enshrined in the Council's statute and its legal instruments. Our experience in building a greater Europe without dividing lines can benefit people around the world.

The world reacted with compassion and solidarity to the terrorist attacks of 11 September. Governments and international organizations expressed their determination to resolutely fight international terrorism. For its part, the Council of Europe decided on a broad package of initial decisions to strengthen its own action in the fight against terrorism in all its forms, and to address the factors likely to feed it.

Our action has three dimensions. Legal cooperation to combat terrorism is one of the cornerstones of our contribution. At their meeting on 7 and 8 November this year, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe emphasized that, alongside prevention of terrorism and eradication of its causes, one of the key objectives of action against terrorism is to bring the alleged perpetrators of the attacks to justice. This presupposes a legal framework permitting substantial international cooperation, such as that which the Council of Europe has set up at the pan-European level.

All 43 Council member States have now signed the European Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism, which has also been opened for signature to the five observer States. Furthermore, member States that have not yet done so have been invited to sign and speed up ratification of several other Council of Europe instruments relevant to the fight against terrorism. They have also been asked to reconsider any reservations made to these agreements in the past. The treaties I am referring to include the European Convention on Laundering, Search, Seizure and Confiscation of the Proceeds from Crime, of 1990, and the new Convention on Cybercrime, which was opened for signature on 23 November in Budapest. This Convention is the first international instrument facilitating the conduct of criminal investigations in cyberspace. These, as well as other relevant conventions of the Council of Europe, are open for signature by all States.

Secondly, the Committee of Ministers decided that guidelines should be drawn up on the basis of democratic principles to deal with movements threatening the fundamental values and principles of the Council of Europe. As recently as last week, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) made a common statement to Governments that action against terrorism must not undermine human rights, including legitimate dissent.

Thirdly, the Committee of Ministers, while stressing that terrorism cannot be associated with any particular culture, expressed their determination to promote a wide, multicultural dialogue. The Council of Europe is thus fully in line with the United Nations initiative for a dialogue among civilizations.

The wide range of cooperation between the Council of Europe and the United Nations is very well reflected in the Secretary-General's report (A/56/302). Let me underline the importance we attach to our cooperation with the United Nations to prevent conflict and build peace in South-Eastern Europe and the Caucasus. Our two organizations have long-standing cooperation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and now in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

In this context we also contribute to the work of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) in a variety of areas, such as human rights, legal reform, minority protection and education. At the request of UNMIK and the OSCE, the Council of Europe observed the electoral process in Kosovo. On 21 November the Head of the Council of Europe Long-Term Election Observation Mission handed the final report on the Assembly elections held on 17 November to the Special Representative of the United

Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Hans Haekkerup, and recommended that this election be certified as valid.

The Council of Europe has made special efforts to contribute to United Nations summits and special sessions. I would like to mention in particular the Council's contribution to the World Conference against Racism, held last summer in Durban, for which we organized the regional European preparatory conference in October 2000. Ministers of the Council of Europe member States adopted a political declaration in which they declared their commitment to combat racial discrimination and intolerance and agreed on a number of further steps to that end. The Council of Europe will shortly organize a meeting to consider the follow-up to be given to the Durban Conference at European level.

I am also pleased that our European Charter of Local Self-government has been used extensively as a model for the draft world charter of local self-government currently being prepared by the United Nations Commission on Human Settlements as part of the follow-up to the process of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II).

The welfare and rights of children is another sector in which the Council of Europe and the United Nations have cooperated closely. In addition to developing its own conventions and recommendations, the Committee of Ministers has addressed a political message to the special session on children, which sadly was postponed for the tragic reasons to which I referred earlier. The message reaffirms the commitment of Council of Europe Governments to the principles agreed upon at the 1990 World Summit for Children and recognizes the importance and universality of the standards enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Also with an eye to the special session and in partnership with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and with the United Kingdom organization Save the Children, the Council of Europe organized a consultation on children, held at Budapest last April. In a similar vein, the Council, together with UNICEF and with Hungary's National Institute of Criminology, organized, on 20 and 21 November and also at Budapest, the European preparatory conference for the second World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, to be held at Yokohama later this month.

In another area, I would also like to single out the 10 October Committee of Ministers declaration on the International Criminal Court. The ministers stated that they were convinced of the importance of putting an end to impunity for the perpetrators of the most serious crimes of concern to the international community as a whole. They called on member, applicant and observer States which had not yet done so to become, as soon as possible, parties to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. They also declared their readiness to provide States which so requested with the appropriate assistance with a view to the ratification and implementation of the Statute.

In the framework of the International Year of Volunteers declared by the General Assembly, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe adopted a recommendation inviting Governments, among other things, to eliminate in their laws and practice all obstacles preventing people from engaging in voluntary action and to promote dynamic policies favouring such action. That text, and the report on which it was based, were prepared in close cooperation with the European team of the United Nations Volunteers.

Our concern for human rights and human dignity does not stop at the borders of Europe. In order to create a better understanding of the complexity of the intimate links that exist among all countries, and to create greater solidarity among the peoples of the world, the Council of Europe in 1989 set up the European Centre for Global Interdependence and Solidarity, which is usually referred to as the North-South Centre. The Centre, which is based in Lisbon, aims also at bringing universal standards of democracy and human rights to other continents. The Council of Europe, the North-South Centre and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs organized an expert reflection on pathways to social development as a follow-up to the June 2000 special session on social development and in preparation for the forthcoming session of the United Nations Commission for Social Development. Through the "Dignity International: All human rights for all" initiative, the Centre will contribute to the advancement of economic, social and cultural rights as guaranteed by the relevant United Nations and Council of Europe instruments.

Those examples sufficiently illustrate the scope of the cooperation that has evolved over the years between the Council of Europe and the United Nations.

Let me conclude by reiterating the importance we attach to working closely with the United Nations, notably in the fields of democracy, human rights and human dignity. We look forward to increased cooperation and improved coordination in order to make the best possible use of our respective strengths, to be more effective and to avoid duplication. In that context, I am happy to announce that we will host the next tripartite meeting of the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Council of Europe, to be held at Strasbourg on 8 February 2002, which is to be preceded on the previous day by a target-oriented meeting devoted to confidence-building measures in South-Eastern Europe.

The Acting President: In accordance with Assembly resolution 48/5 of 13 October 1993, I call on the observer for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Mr. Kubis (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe): It is an honour to address the General Assembly, complementing the statement made yesterday by the Chairman-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Mr. Mircea Geoana, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Romania. Let me state from the outset that considerable progress has indeed been made in cooperation between the OSCE and the United Nations, as documented in the report (A/56/125) of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, on this subject.

Following the outrageous terrorist attacks of 11 September, the issue of combating terrorism has received top priority. The OSCE participating States, respecting the United Nations as the global legal framework for the fight against terrorism, are adding their national, bilateral and multilateral action to that fight in close cooperation with other organizations and forums.

At the same time, the OSCE participating States will defend freedom and protect their citizens against acts of terrorism, fully respecting international law and human rights. They firmly reject the identification of terrorism with any nationality or religion. The OSCE will also look into how to promote further and contribute to multicultural and inter-religious dialogue. Owing to its broad membership of 55 States, including States of Central Asia, its comprehensive approach to security and its joint work with its the Mediterranean and Asian partners for cooperation, the OSCE is particularly well suited for this.

To increase the capacities of the OSCE in the increasingly important area of policing and in order to better organize its activities, the OSCE has decided to create a Senior Police Adviser position in its secretariat. With that decision, the OSCE will be in a position to provide the necessary conceptual and operational support for and to enhance the OSCE role in civilian police related activities, including successful ongoing OSCE activities on the ground. Once we have established that capacity early next year, the Senior Police Adviser will actively develop contacts and cooperation with OSCE countries and international partners. Naturally, the United Nations system, together with the European Union and the European Commission, will be high on the priority list.

Taking into account the planned departure of the United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the International Police Task Force (IPTF) from that country, it has been agreed that the principal international organizations operating in the country will engage in a collective strategic review of their activities and recommend a further course of complementary action. The OSCE favours a timely decision on the best options for the succession of IPTF to allow for a smooth and comprehensive transition. The OSCE has experience to offer in this regard, also gained from cooperation with individual countries and its major international counterparts.

On 26 September 2001, the Security Council adopted resolution 1371 (2001), welcoming the signing of the Framework Agreement and the international efforts to facilitate its full implementation in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Two days later, the OSCE Permanent Council adopted a decision to enhance our Spillover Monitor Mission in Skopje by over 200 civilian monitors and police advisers. Within one month, almost all additional staff was on the ground.

This successful rapid action was greatly facilitated by the Rapid Expert Assistance and Cooperation Teams (REACT) system of rapid deployment of civilian expertise, including police, which has become operational this year. This system not only enables us to act more quickly if needed; it also sets quality and qualification standards for different basic categories of civilian personnel with the

aim of making the recruitment process for both seconded and contracted positions more transparent and objective.

The OSCE and, notably, its field operations enjoy very close cooperation with their United Nations counterparts in the areas of staff security. Meetings in which information is shared and responses coordinated are a regular feature of our relations. We are grateful to the United Nations for cooperation and support. Staff security continues to be a priority of both the United Nations and the OSCE and every effort on our part will be made to increase the already strong cooperation. The joint training of mission members is an area that could be further explored.

Let me also use this opportunity to pay a special tribute to our United Nations colleagues serving in the field, often together with us, and to commend their dedication, hard work and courage. The Nobel Peace Price is a well-deserved acknowledgement of this excellent work of the United Nations and Secretary-General Kofi Annan and I congratulate our United Nations colleagues on it. We also know that this work and these achievements are not without risk and price — sometimes, regrettably, the ultimate one. We feel sorrow and are ourselves deeply hurt by such tragedies as the recent loss of life in the shooting-down of a United Nations helicopter in Georgia.

At the Bucharest Ministerial Council, the OSCE adopted a number of decisions that are particularly relevant to our cooperation in different horizontal areas of common interest. They concern such matters as the struggle against aggressive nationalism, racism, chauvinism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and violent extremism; combating all forms of trafficking in human beings; providing equal opportunities for Roma and Sinti; combating all forms of violence against women; or strengthening cooperation in the economic and environmental areas.

Cooperation at the field level is facilitated by increasingly regular contacts at the headquarters level. The OSCE and the United Nations have throughout the year closely liaised and discussed their planning and work in the field, using different working-level and political channels. We have moved a step further; these days, we are conducting, here in New York, our first high-officials OSCE secretariat staff meeting with the United Nations Secretariat and the United Nations Development Programme on a comprehensive set of issues and areas of cooperation. On the OSCE side, participants include the OSCE Coordinator for Economic and Environmental Activities. We would like to continue such staff meetings on a regular basis in Vienna and in New York.

The OSCE, in close cooperation with the United Nations Office at Geneva and the Department of Political Affairs, is also prepared to take the lead in convening the first regional follow-up to the Fourth High-level United Nations-Regional Organizations Meeting on cooperation for peace-building, which took place last February in New York. The agenda and modalities are currently subject to consultations with the United Nations.

In conclusion, I would like to express satisfaction with the expanding and intensifying web of relations between the OSCE and the United Nations. The promotion of peace, security, stability, democratic reforms and development in the OSCE area is a task that requires increasingly structured and pragmatic dialogue and cooperation among all relevant international partners and the United Nations has a key, indeed indispensable place in this, pursuant to its global mandate and responsibilities. Furthering cooperation with the United Nations will thus firmly remain my priority also in the coming period.

The Acting President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 477 (V) of 1 November 1950, I now call cal on the observer for the League of Arab States.

Mr. Hassouna (League of Arab States) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I am pleased to congratulate Mr. Han Seung-soo on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session. His election to that high post was an expression of confidence in him personally and of the international community's appreciation of his country, the Republic of Korea.

The report submitted to this Assembly in document A/56/474 of 17 October 2001 must be appreciated and commended for its content. We also pay a tribute to Secretary-General Kofi Annan and congratulate him on his re-election and on the Nobel Peace Prize that has been awarded to him and the United Nations in recognition of the contributions he and his colleagues have made to the welfare of mankind.

There is no doubt that the cooperative relationship between the United Nations and the League of Arab States has been pursued and progressively developed for decades, resulting in important experience and achievements. The annual report of the Secretary-General on this item has always addressed those achievements and various aspects of cooperation and has always been discussed and assessed by the General Assembly. The Secretary-General's report before us today clearly addresses the consultations and exchanges of information between the United Nations and the League of Arab States at various levels, in addition to the follow-up to proposals made in meetings held between bodies and organs of the two organizations.

In this context, I wish to highlight some of the important ongoing consultations being undertaken at the highest levels on many international and Arab issues.

The Secretary-General participated in and made a statement to the Summit Meeting of the League of Arab States held on 27 and 28 March in Amman, in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. He also met with the Secretary General of the Arab League in Cairo, New York and London.

The Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East participated in the meetings of the Council of the League of Arab States at the level of Ministers for Foreign Affairs in March 2001, contacts and meetings between the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East peace process and high-level officials of the League, and various other meetings at various levels on important issues. The report also provides a summary of cooperative measures agreed in the general meeting between the representatives of the two organizations and their specialized agencies, bodies and various institutions, from 17 to 19 July in Vienna, Austria. In this regard, we would like to make some observations.

First, we reaffirm the strong commitment of the League of Arab States to cooperate with the United Nations and to coordinate efforts to promote international peace and security, in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, in order to achieve sustainable development, welfare and prosperity for all nations and peoples, thus ensuring the security of mankind based on international peace and security.

Secondly, we reaffirm our commitment to cooperation with the United Nations in open and sectoral meetings addressing specialized issues. We ascribe great importance to the level of representation of the United Nations in these meetings, which should be at the highest possible level in view of their importance. We also urge the United Nations specialized agencies and organizations to make these meetings a higher priority and to participate in them more effectively to achieve the desired objectives.

Thirdly, I would like to stress our keen interest in the next sectoral meeting to be held at the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States next year, on the use of information technology in development. This is an extremely important issue for the Arab region, particularly in the light of our action to establish a free trade zone in the Arab region.

Fourthly, I would like to emphasize the importance of the decision taken recently between the two sides on the issue of capacity-building. This decision is of great importance to the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States, particularly within the framework of its efforts to restructure and update the Arab League.

Lastly, I would like to express our readiness to cooperate fully and closely with the United Nations in implementing the Millennium Declaration of 8 September 2000 and to promote cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations in accordance with Article 8 of the Charter.

In spite of the optimism that prevailed in the world with the coming of the new millennium, and the opportunity that presented itself when the leaders of the world held the Millennium Summit to lead the United Nations towards a new era in which the basic principles of international legitimacy would be consolidated, the tragic events in the United States on 11 September, which coincided with the opening of this session of the General Assembly, have led to the inclusion in the agenda of many unprecedented international and regional discussions involving the whole spectrum of political, economic, cultural and social issues. Some of the most important of these were to resolve various conflicts and to maintain international peace and security; to establish a mechanism to avoid the negative consequences of globalization for developing countries; to fight selectivity and double standards in

relations between countries; to enforce human rights standards; to fight poverty; to establish justice and democracy; and to help developing countries achieve sustainable social and economic development and acquire information technology while protecting the environment. These objectives can be achieved only through the effective coordination of efforts among all international and regional organizations, particularly the United Nations and the League of Arab States.

The events of 11 September have revealed clearly the urgent need for a collective effort by the international community to establish a world order based on justice and the rule of law. I would like to recall the position of the League of Arab States on this issue.

First, the League has strongly condemned the terrorist acts against the United States on 11 September, since they run counter to the teachings of all divine religions and ethical values. Yet we have categorically rejected any attempt to link terrorism with Islam and have reasserted the importance of distinguishing between terrorist acts and the legitimate right to end occupation and guarantee the right to self-determination.

Secondly, we have condemned all terrorist acts, no matter what their source, aimed at innocent civilians anywhere in the world.

Thirdly, we have also reaffirmed that terrorism is a global phenomenon from which all peoples and countries of the world have suffered, particularly Arab and Muslim people.

Fourthly, we have stressed that the Arab and Islamic culture is one of peace and stability, and that the elimination of terrorism in all its forms can be achieved only through peaceful political and cultural coexistence among all nations.

Fifthly, we have called for the holding of an international conference, under the auspices of the United Nations, to reach a clear definition of terrorism, to determine its root causes and to set up collective plans to deal with it and eliminate it.

Sixthly, we have stressed the importance of distinguishing between legitimate resistance to occupation, as enshrined in all religions, and terrorist acts by individuals or States.

The question of Palestine has been on the agenda of the United Nations for more than half a century. The Security Council has adopted many resolutions on the Middle East conflict, notably resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), in order to achieve stability and lasting and just peace in the region. These were based on the principle of land for peace. The meetings of the General Assembly are now being held in the shadow of an escalation of the Israeli political and military campaign against the unarmed Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem, and also against the legitimate Palestinian National Authority, in a manner that is totally unprecedented. This has led to a serious deterioration of the humanitarian situation. The cycle of violence and counter-violence will not be broken unless the Israeli occupation of Arab territories is ended.

In this regard, I would like to reaffirm the position of the League of Arab States with regard to Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the importance we attach to them. The implementation of these resolutions is the only way to end the suffering of the Palestinian people and the occupation. In addition, it would reflect the Organization's, in particular the Security Council's, full assumption of its responsibility under the Charter to find a just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the Palestinian question, put an end to the tension in the Middle East and establish an independent Palestinian State with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

Finally, we ascribe great importance to the agenda item on dialogue among civilizations now before the General Assembly. In this regard, a meeting of Arab intellectuals on the issue of a dialogue among civilizations, entitled "The Dialogue of Civilizations: An Exchange and not a Clash", was held on 26 and 27 November 2001 at the headquarters of the League of Arab States in Cairo. This was an important Arab event, during which Arab countries were determined to promote dialogue among civilizations and respect for cultural diversity as a means for communications and progress and disseminating a culture of peace and justice that would prevent the outbreak of conflicts.

Here we would like to reiterate the readiness of the Arab world closely to cooperate with all other human civilizations to close the gap among nations, to expand contacts, reduce differences, resolve conflicts and achieve a peaceful settlement of all disputes.

While the United Nations represents international legitimacy, the League of Arab States represents Arab legitimacy. In the context of this legitimacy, I should like to reaffirm our keen interest in establishing closer cooperation and coordination with the United Nations in order to achieve the desired results and to find solutions to issues relating to peace, security and human development.

The President: In accordance with Assembly resolution 2011 (XX) of 11 October 1965, I now call on the observer for the Organization of African Unity.

Mr. Ngung (Organization of African Unity) (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset, on behalf of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), to convey to you, Sir, our heartfelt and warmest congratulations on your election to the presidency of the Assembly. Rest assured that the OAU stands ready to provide unswerving support to you in your difficult task of bringing the work of this session to a successful conclusion.

I should like here to thank all of those who spoke earlier and encouraged and supported the efforts of the OAU and the United Nations to strengthen their cooperation in the context of a mutually beneficial partnership. I should like in particular to mention the representative of the Chairman-in-Office of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the Permanent Representative of Zambia.

Our thanks go also, of course, to the Secretariat for its commitment and for its unceasing efforts to promote cooperation between our two organizations. Indeed, last year we described this cooperation as exemplary. Today, we strongly reiterate once again our organization's deep satisfaction on this score and the importance that the OAU attaches to this cooperation.

The report submitted by the Secretary-General in document A/56/489, dated 19 October 2001, which is currently under consideration by the Assembly, takes note of the work done and of the achievements realized this year by the OAU and the United Nations in the context of their cooperation agreement. True, there was no shortage of difficulties in the implementation of certain joint programmes, and yet we must recognize that the United Nations and the OAU have done their utmost to overcome the difficulties encountered and to achieve what they could.

In the context of the cooperation linking the two organizations, summit-level meetings were held between the two Secretaries-General that made it possible to assess the progress made in the implementation of the programme of action adopted at the biennial meeting of the two organizations, which was held at Addis Ababa in April 2000. On the ground, regular consultations have been held between the United Nations liaison office and the OAU to implement the directives of the leadership and the recommendations embodied in the resolutions of the Assembly.

In that context, we are pleased that other activities have been undertaken by our organization, in close concert with the other agencies of the United Nations system in the economic, social and humanitarian arenas.

This session is taking place just a few months after the thirty-seventh ordinary session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity, held in Lusaka, Zambia, in July 2001. At the Lusaka summit, the Conference took a number of major decisions, including the one on the transition from the OAU to the African Union.

In taking such a decision, the heads of State and Government realized the dream of the founding fathers of the Organization of African Unity. The OAU Assembly also adopted a Declaration concerning the adoption of the New African Initiative — an initiative that was reviewed by the Implementation Committee of the Heads of State and Government, which met in Abuja, Nigeria, last October. This revised initiative has today become the New Partnership for Africa's Development, which is a genuine plan of action that defines the new vision of Africa's leaders for the renaissance of Africa and its development.

The New Partnership stresses peace and security, recognizing that democracy, human rights and good governance are fundamental elements of development. In deciding to launch the African Union in the framework of the New Partnership, the heads of State and Government clearly understood that Africa's development is first and foremost the responsibility of the Africans themselves. Thus they displayed their determination to alleviate Africa's plight and demonstrated that Africans are ready to take charge of their own development.

The New Partnership for Africa's Development is a clearly defined and well-structured political framework for promoting the development of the continent at a time of globalization and in the light of the major problems relating to African development that can be seen looming in the near future. It was elaborated following an in-depth examination of the political, economic and social situation throughout the continent and once the heads of State and of Government had clearly identified the problems that have hamstrung the development of the African continent.

Africa's efforts to implement the New Partnership can succeed only if they are supported by the international community. Throughout this debate we have noted with satisfaction the unanimous support of delegations for the New Partnership for Africa's Development. We thus take this opportunity to call on all of our development partners and all those of goodwill to render genuine support for Africa in its efforts towards development.

The Lusaka summit, which decided to transform the OAU into the African Union, also empowered its Secretary-General to hold the consultations necessary with member States during this transitional period as to the modalities and the guidelines for creating the various organs of the African Union. This is a difficult task, which our Secretary-General must tackle while continuing to deal with the urgent problems — including conflicts — still confronting Africa. Indeed, despite the positive developments in certain conflict areas in Africa, where peace agreements entered into by the parties have brought a certain calm, Africa is still considered today to be a continent of seemingly never-ending conflicts, whose consequences include a constantly increasing number of refugees and displaced persons; a continent of want, where poverty and endemic disease have taken up residence; a continent where good governance and human rights are scorned. All of these scourges, which are Africa's lot today, are compounded by the burden of external debt and natural disasters, such as drought and floods.

As for the specific conflicts in Africa, the OAU, which considers conflict settlement to be a matter of priority, has spared no effort during the year now drawing to a close in searching for lasting solutions to such problems within the framework of its Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution. The Central Organ of the Mechanism has tackled these issues at ambassadorial level and ministerial level, as well as at the level of heads of State. In the context of conflict management throughout the continent, the OAU has continued to support the initiatives of African subregional organizations. It has enjoyed the support of the United Nations, within the context of existing cooperation, as the situation has demanded.

In this context, I welcome the praiseworthy job done by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in his report on the deep-rooted causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa. We support the recommendations and the measures contained in it.

The problem of HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases, such as tuberculosis and malaria, which are ravaging the population of Africa was the subject of a special OAU summit in Abuja in April 2001. A special session of the General Assembly devoted to the same problem was held here at the United Nations in New York, at the conclusion of which a Declaration of Commitment, annexed to resolution S-26/2, was adopted on 27 June 2001. We reiterate our hope that the international community will honour the commitments that it has entered into.

The question of Africa's external debt continues to concern African countries at the highest level. External debt and debt servicing are paralysing the development of the continent at all levels. Many countries are almost on their knees under the weight of the debt and are unable to put their development programmes into effect. For its part, the OAU would like once again to call on its partners to bear in mind the sacrifices made by our countries and to consider the best way to cancel the debt so as to make economic recovery possible for African countries. At a time when, in a spirit of solidarity, we are trying to meet the challenges facing us within the framework of the commitments we made at the Millennium Summit, we believe that we must further strengthen the cooperation between our institutions on the basis of true partnership.

Only under such conditions will we be able to translate into reality all the good intentions expressed here. For its part, the Organization of African Unity remains ready to strengthen the cooperation that already exists linking us with the United Nations in all areas of common interest.

The Acting President: As members will realize, we were a little over-optimistic in thinking we could finish everything before lunch. We did not succeed, so we will have to come back at 3 p.m. to hear the remaining speakers.

A vote will be taken on resolution A/56/L.38, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization". We hope that all representatives will come back for action on all the draft resolutions. I am sorry that we did not succeed in completing our work this morning.

Programme of work

The Acting President: I should like to make an announcement concerning the programme of work of the General Assembly. On Thursday, 13 December 2001, as a first item in the morning, the General Assembly will take up agenda item 14, "Report of the International Atomic Energy Agency", to consider draft resolution A/56/L.10 and the amendment thereto contained in document A/56/L.11. As the second item, the General Assembly will consider a number of draft resolutions under agenda item 20, "Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance", and its sub-items. I should also like to inform members that the consideration of agenda item 37, "The role of diamonds in fuelling conflict", originally scheduled for the morning of Friday, 14 December 2001, is postponed to a later date.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.